



GREENSBORO URBAN AREA
Metropolitan Planning Organization

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of September 24, 2003

1:45 p.m. Greensboro, NC

Plaza Level Conference Room

Melvin Municipal Office Building

(Greensboro City Hall)

TAC MEMBERS PRESENT

Sandy Carmany	TAC Chair
Jim Westmoreland	TCC Chair
Doug Galyon	NC Board of Transportation
Robbie Perkins	Greensboro City Council
Don Vaughan	Greensboro City Council
Bob Landreth	Guilford County Board of Commissioners
Mary Rakestraw	Guilford County Board of Commissioners

ATTENDANCE

Tyler Meyer	GDOT/MPO	Peggy Holland	GDOT/MPO
Jeff Sovich	GDOT/MPO	Adam Fischer	GDOT
Craig McKinney	GDOT/MPO	George Linney	GTA
Scott Rhine	PART	Philip Kempf	GDOT/MPO
Kimberly Hinton	NCDOT	Allen Purser	GSO Chamber of Commerce
Monica Kerr	NCDOT	Sheila Holman	NCDENR - DAQ
Ken Taffer	NCDOT Division 7	Robert Gordon	Town of Summerfield
Mike Mills	NCDOT Division 7	Gregg Danzer	Town of Pleasant Garden
Stephen Stansbery	Kimley-Horn and Associates		

Sandy Carmany called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

Action Items

1. Approve Minutes of July 23, 2003

Don Vaughan moved for approval of the minutes. Robbie Perkins seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes as prepared.

Business / Potential Action Items

1. NC Moving Ahead!

Mike Mills advised that the final list of NC Moving Ahead! projects has been approved by Governor Easley and released publicly. Some of these projects will be completed very quickly; our goal is still to get all the projects let to contract during year one of the program, by February, 2004. It's an aggressive schedule, but these are projects that have been identified by MPOs, counties, other governmental entities, or individual residents. Among the five counties in this division, there were 320 total requests submitted, with a total estimated cost of over \$60 million. But the division was allocated only \$21 million, so we had to be selective. We reviewed every project request we received; some were pretty easy to cull out. Factors we considered included condition of existing pavement, traffic volumes, and accident histories. Proximity to a school was a very significant factor in our analysis. Some projects were able to be funded through some other source. The result of the review is this list. We're now doing detailed examinations of each project for right of way and environmental concerns. Projects with possible right of way or environmental problems will be shifted to year two, or deleted from the program, if necessary. One particular project, the US 220 resurfacing project does not involve any right of way or environmental issues, and should move forward very easily.

Jim Westmoreland requested that the Wendover Avenue resurfacing project, which was requested but not receive funding through the NC Moving Ahead! program, be considered if any subsequent changes are made to the list. Mike Mills explained that the Wendover Avenue project is still on NCDOT's list of identified needs, but didn't make the cut for years one or two due to the estimated cost, as well as the anticipated right of way issues involved. If there are any other projects that the Greensboro MPO identifies as more worthwhile than what's currently listed for year two, there is certainly time to try to rearrange the year two list.

Jim Westmoreland asked when the public transportation portion of NC Moving Ahead! would be announced. Mike Mills did not have that information but explained that David King in the Public Transportation Division was the appropriate person to contact.

Gregg Danzer of Pleasant Garden inquired about the status of the town's request for resurfacing of SR 3412, Tabernacle Church Road, which did not receive funding from the NC Moving Ahead! program. Mike Mills replied that his staff would investigate that item.

2. Update on NCDOT Noise Wall Policies

Mike Mills advised that upon a request from the MPO, NCDOT Division 7 has begun investigating options for aesthetic enhancements to the noise barrier walls planned to be installed along the Greensboro Western Urban Loop and in conjunction with the widening of I-40. To upgrade the noise

walls along the Urban Loop from standard concrete to a brick design would have an estimated cost of approximately \$750,000. Another alternative would be to construct the standard concrete walls and install enhanced landscaping treatments in front of them.

The amount of landscaping funds that are allocated by the state to each construction project is determined by the type of project, whether the facility is urban, rural, interstate, etc. For interstates, one percent of the total project cost is set aside for landscaping. For the I-40 widening, this amounts to just over \$1 million for 9 miles. The type of landscaping that can be used to improve the appearance of noise walls will depend heavily on the amount of landscaping funds available. A high-grade landscaping treatment can cost \$200,000 or more per mile, while a standard landscaping treatment on a single interchange will cost around \$200,000. For comparison, the landscaping at the Freeman Mill Road interchange on I-40 cost about \$400,000 because of its role as a gateway to the community. There may be other sources of funding available to supplement the landscaping set-aside, such as the Enhancements program.

Ken Taffer advised that a very basic landscaping arrangement, referred to as “Type A,” with just some low shrubs, junipers, and burning bushes would cost around \$20,000 per mile. Often after the walls have been in place for a few years, kudzu, ivy, and other weeds grow on and around them, and although this may be visually pleasing, these plants can really damage the structure of the wall over time. The “Type B” landscaping treatment would add Leland cypress, willow oak, crepe myrtle, or other trees. This level would have an estimated cost of \$100,000 per mile. The “Type C” landscaping would add Russian sage and day lilies, bringing the estimated cost to \$200,000 to \$300,000 per mile.

Mike Mills advised that upgrading standard noise walls to brick construction has an estimated cost of \$250,000 to \$300,000 per mile. However, there are other types of texture and color treatments for the surfaces of the noise walls that can be used to enhance their visual appeal, but that further investigation on these will be needed. Robbie Perkins stated that it would be preferable to use enhanced landscaping in front of the walls, rather than alternative construction materials because any type of wall will be unappealing, without suitable landscaping. Mike Mills stated that Ken Taffer would be working with NCDOT engineers in Raleigh to develop a plan for landscaping on the I-40 widening project.

Jim Westmoreland recommended that the TCC and MPO staff work with Mike and Ken to develop a standard type of landscaping treatment for I-40 and the Urban Loop noise walls, based on a reasonable estimate of the level of funding that will be available.

3. High Point Road Widening Update

Missy Dickens advised that the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the High Point Road Widening and Relocation Project has been released for public review. The next step in the process will be two pre-hearing open house workshops, which will be held on September 29th and 30th, from 4:00 to 8:00 pm. One will be at the Greensboro end of the project, and the other will be at the High Point end of the project. These drop-in style open houses are the public’s opportunity to actually discuss the project one-on-one with the staff to see how their property will be affected; there won’t be much of an opportunity to do so at the formal hearing, so those who want to talk more about the project are encouraged to come to an open house. Local staff do not need to attend both. Comments submitted in writing either by mail or at one of the open houses will be given the same consideration as comments made at the public hearing. All the information about the meetings and hearing is listed in the latest newsletter for the project.

The official public hearing on the environmental document has been scheduled for Monday, October 6th at Guilford Technical Community College in the Sears Technology Building, starting at 7:00pm and going as late as needed. At least 30 days after the hearing, we will compile and address all the comments. Then we will hold a post-hearing meeting and schedule meetings with the regulatory and approving agencies and hopefully get consensus on a preferred alternative for the project to be announce by Secretary Tippet. Then we will prepare the final environmental impact statement. The plan right now is not to have another hearing, if changes in the project are needed, which is probable, we may have to hold a second hearing and the final document should be out next year, with a final decision early 2005 or late 2004.

NCDOT has a recommended alternative, although it is not considered the preferred alternative. We are recommending Alternative 2, for the same reasons that have been on the table for years now. Because of the federal funding involved in this project, there is a significant constraint as to the alternatives that are available. As a result, Alternative 2 is really the only viable choice; we don't want to mislead the public that there is any possibility of another alternative being selected. On the public hearing map, Alternative 2 is referred to as the NCDOT "recommended" alternative, because prior to issuance of the appropriate permit by the Corps of Engineers, the alternative may not be identified as "preferred." The Corps will not issue a permit until the public hearing has been conducted and the environmental document has been approved. The Greensboro end of the project, the "C" section is scheduled for right of way beginning in 2005 and construction in 2008.

The current project cost estimate on Alternative 2 is approximately \$124 million. Among the alternatives, number of relocations range from about 100 to 111, with roughly 106 associated with Alternative 2, of which, about 3 dozen are businesses. There will be full control of access along the project between at-grade intersections, meaning that no new driveways will be permitted for new development, although existing driveways will be allowed to remain. The public hearing map reflects NCDOT's new median policy, which means that left turns into or out of driveways will no longer be permitted at many points along the project. Some access points along intersecting streets will also be removed. Although these policies will be adhered to fairly firmly, there may be some opportunities for selected exceptions, which will be heard on a case-by-case basis at the post-hearing meeting. But the primary intent of these policies is to ensure that the facility's integrity and ability to handle traffic is maintained long term.

4. Upcoming TIP Project Planning Activities

Tyler Meyer advised that the current focus in the development of the 2006 – 2012 TIP is preparing the priorities needs list. This involves reviewing the needs identified in the previous year's list as well as developing the list for this year. Staff will coordinate with the TCC by holding a work session sometime in the next month or so, to discuss the needs and begin the process of developing a list for the TAC's consideration. Several projects from last year's list will merit inclusion and detailed study of these projects has begun. These projects include the Eckerson Road / US 29 interchange, the Summit Avenue widening, and the Horse Pen Creek widening. Possible new priorities include the two proposed Urban Loop interchanges at Cone Boulevard and at Lewiston Road. In the last session of the General Assembly, both interchanges were added to the statutory description of the Urban Loop, making them

eligible to use the highway trust fund. Consequently, it's important to proceed with the planning work to get these connector roads constructed so those interchanges can be built once the Loop is completed. MPO staff will present more information about the process and upcoming steps in October.

Jeff Sovich advised that the process of developing the 2006 – 2012 TIP is in the very early stages and that the priority needs list will be developed over the next three months or so. Phase I of this process will involve close coordination with NCDOT. There will be a Division 7 public input meeting on the TIP process on Thursday, October 23rd. This meeting will provide an opportunity for public review of the initial list of priority needs. There will be an opportunity for public comment at a regularly scheduled MPO meeting, perhaps in December. At the beginning of 2004, the TAC adopt the final priority needs list, followed by priority needs session with NCDOT.

In Phase II, NCDOT will begin drafting the statewide TIP project listing for the Greensboro MPO area, which would be released sometime around mid-2004. Then NCDOT will hold a public hearing on the draft TIP sometime in the fall followed by Greensboro holding draft MTIP public meeting and comment period sometime around the end of 2004. At the beginning of 2005 we'll have an MTIP negotiation meeting with NCDOT; that concludes phase two. Phase three will consist of developing the actual final MTIP document and performing analysis in the spring followed by approval of the revised MTIP if the state requires that, also in the spring. Final MTIP and conforming determination adopted by the TAC sometime mid-next year followed by adoption of the state TIP by the board of transportation summer of 2005, and finally the effective date for the 2006-2012 MTIP would be October 1, 2005.

5. LRTP Development Update

Tyler Meyer advised that the process for developing the update to the Long Range Transportation Plan is now under way, with the consultant team of Kimley-Horn & Associates, Martin-Alexiou-Bryson, and the ETC Group, providing strategic support. The present LRTP extends to 2025, while the updated plan will reach to 2030. The plan will make assumptions about what transportation improvements will be needed and can be constructed in the area over that timeframe. The plan will also include a detailed review and update of the Thoroughfare Plan and will add a Collector Streets Plan, which will identify future connectivity needs throughout the area. Process will include extensive public involvement activities. MPO staff will coordinate closely with the TCC through a series of work sessions and will periodically brief the TAC at key milestone points in the process. The plan will be developed over a fairly tight timeline because the governing federal regulations require that both it and the MPO's air quality conformity analysis be completed and approved by FHWA by September 30th of 2004. To sum up, the LRTP update will identify transportation priorities over the long term, including those not contemplated by the current Long Range Plan. The 2030 LRTP will also be the first to incorporate the proposed PART regional commuter rail / bus rapid transit project. Staff will present additional information at upcoming meetings, including a timeline and opportunities for involvement.

6. EAC / Air Quality Update

Sheila Holman advised that with regard to the Triad Early Action Compact process, the Triad is certain to be designated as a non-attainment area under the 8-hour ozone standard. Currently only one monitor, Pilot Mountain in Forsyth County, is attaining the standard. All others are exceeding the 84 parts per million threshold, with the Cooleemee monitor registering the highest level.

The Triad is the largest of the four EAC areas in North Carolina and possibly the largest in the country. In order to maintain the EAC benefit of a deferred non-attainment effective date, the area must continue

to meet the reporting milestones. To date, the Triad has successfully completed the signing of the compact by local government entities, and the preparation of a list of emissions reduction strategies to be considered. Next, the state will submit the full state implementation plan to EPA for the EAC areas by December 31 of this year. By March 31, 2004 the Triad will have to submit a final list of emissions reduction strategies to EPA. Then EPA will issue its designations of 8-hour ozone non-attainment areas in April of 2004. By September 2005, the Triad will need to begin implementation of the control measures. December 2006 is the deadline to evaluate progress in implementing the control measures. Finally, December 2007 is the date by which the Triad must demonstrate attainment of the 8-hour ozone standard.

In North Carolina, the key fact to bear in mind is that in order to reduce ozone levels, the most effective strategy is to reduce emissions of Oxides of Nitrogen (NO_x). This is because the other primary contributor to ozone here are Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), 85% of which are the by-products of natural vegetation. NO_x on the other hand is a product of man-made sources, such as vehicles, construction equipment, lawn and garden equipment, airport machinery, etc.

The basic air quality conformity analysis process consists of projecting emissions into the future and comparing to the threshold value. So far, we have completed this analysis for 2 of the 4 specified episodes. The analysis shows that all but 2 of the monitors attain the standard by 2007. The large number of new federal and state controls going into effect over the next four years are expected to significantly reduce emissions levels. Cleaner cars, cleaner gasoline and diesel fuel, the clean smokestacks act, and the NO_x SIP call will all contribute to this improvement. But even with all of these measures, the Triad still isn't able to reach attainment, which presents the real challenge for the EAC stakeholder committee.

Because the Triad needs to continue to meet the 1 hour ozone standard during the EAC process, the state needs to update the Triad's maintenance plan. There is currently a preliminary draft maintenance plan that extends through 2015 available for public comment. Updating the maintenance plan involves preparing new motor vehicle emissions budgets, so that it is no longer necessary to compare future years to 1994. The process consists of choosing a clean year such as 2000, perform emissions projections out to 2004, 2007, 2010, 2012, and 2015. Each of the projected years must be below the base year's emission levels. The results of this analysis show that the Triad will indeed be below the base year, primarily due to the same controls that are helping with the 8-hour standard.

Currently NCDENR is working on addressing comments from NCDOT the MPOs on the preliminary draft maintenance plan. There will be an official public hearing this fall. Following the hearing, MPOs will again have an opportunity to comment. NCDENR will address those comments and submit the final plan to EPA by February 2004, which will coincide with the upcoming Greensboro / High Point TIP conformity analysis.

Sandy Carmany stated that there will be a City Council briefing on the EAC process on October 28th. At a subsequent council meeting, the City Council will need to adopt a resolution endorsing the recommendations of the EAC committee. The County Commission will need to do likewise at an upcoming meeting. There will also be a public hearing in Winston-Salem on the Triad's proposed non-attainment designation on October 22nd.

7. MPO Strategic Reports

Tyler Meyer advised that NCDOT has won an Environmental Stewardship Award from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). The award recognizes NCDOT in the category of Best Practices in Organizational Change, for its improved response to environmental concerns and coordination with environmental permitting agencies. We congratulate NCDOT on winning this award.

North Carolina General Statute 136-200.4 has been an ongoing item of concern among MPOs across the state for quite a while now. As you'll recall this statute requires adjacent MPOs within a non-attainment area to coordinate and develop a unified strategy for achieving conformity. NCGS 136-200.4 also establishes significant economic sanctions for failure to do so. MPO staff have worked together with representatives of other MPOs and NCDOT to develop a policy for implementing this law, that will be reasonable, effective, and targeted at encouraging coordination. NCDOT requests that final comments from TAC chairs be submitted by October 31st.

There have been ongoing discussions about the US 421 Interchanges project, R-2612. Recent developments on this project revolve around the Neeley Road vicinity. One of the alternatives under consideration would connect Ridgepoint Drive with Neeley Road in an effort to create a parallel facility. The Town of Pleasant Garden has expressed some concern about that alternative. A local officials' meeting has been scheduled with the NCDOT Division 7 project engineer to discuss the process the alternatives being evaluated, the Town's concerns, and the appropriate next steps. Following that meeting, there would be a second public officials' meeting, around December, once the alternatives analysis is completed. The project public meeting will then be held in early 2004.

Jeff Sovich advised that the designation of Greensboro as a Transportation Management Area carries the responsibility for developing a Congestion Management System, which is currently in very early stages. The consulting firm Martin-Alexiou-Bryson is analyzing the data they have collected and will be meeting with MPO staff soon to review preliminary findings and discuss next steps. This planning project will dovetail nicely into the LRTP process by virtue of the level of detailed analysis it involves.

The North Carolina Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations will be holding its 11th annual conference in Asheville from October 1st through 3rd. We anticipate an interesting and successful conference. Greensboro staff are coordinating several of the sessions, which should be among the highlights of the conference.

Other Items

1. Board Member Report

Doug Galyon reported that construction of the Southern Urban Loop is making steady progress and is on schedule for completion by May of 2004. On the I-40 widening project, the section from High Point Road to Chimney Rock Road should be finished in the next several days. The section from Chimney Rock Road to Sandy Ridge Road is on track for completion in late November. Some Enhancements funding was recently allocated to the US 421 corridor for aesthetic improvements in conjunction with the golf tournament, between Patton Avenue and Pleasant Garden.

2. Reports, Concerns, and Discussion from MPO Area Towns

Don Vaughan stated that the Town of Pleasant Garden wishes to have an NCDOT representative present at its next staff meeting. Mike Mills replied that he would ensure someone was there.

Robert Gordon of the Town of Summerfield inquired on the status of US 220. Mike Mills replied that there has been no change to the status of this project recently.

3. Regional Transportation News

Scott Rhine reported that ridership on the regional PART Express service has reached nearly 600 person-trips per day, roughly double the number of riders from one year ago. On September 30th, a 1 year anniversary celebration for the PART Express service will be held at the PART transfer facility.

4. Wrap-Up

None.

The TAC adjourned at 3:42 p.m.